

Jesus Christ a Believer's Life:

O R,

Life hid in CHRIST with GOD, the best
Secured most Valuable Life.

BEING A SERMON,

Preach'd at the Interment of
MR BENJAMIN USHER,
In FROOM-ZELWOOD,
In the County of SOMERSET,
FRIDAY, January 11. 1723.

By *William Sharpe*,
At Mr. JOHN SHARPE's Meeting-House.

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John 3:16 But God so loved the world

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The world is lost in sin. The people of the world are lost in sin. The people of the world are lost in sin.

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which knowest the evil that cometh upon us; abundantly to

Colossians 3. Verse 3.

For ye are dead, and your Life is hid with Christ
in God.

ELIEVERS being dead while they are alive, and having a Life sacred for 'em in Christ, infinitely beyond the Bounds of Death and Time, lodg'd vastly beyond his fatal Empire, or the Reach of his destructive Attacks, have Reason to look with Serenity and Pleasure, upon the glorious Death they die in time, before Death, and upon the Glories and Felicities of that Life they shall enjoy after it. Hence it is, That the Spirit writes such bright Characters of Glory and Blessedness, upon the precious and lifeless Dust of a departing Saint, *Rev. 14. 13.*

We should all be equally fond of being numbered among the gloriously righteous Dead; as the Death, *Paul* speaks of here in this Place, is very glorious and easy, without Agonies or Pains, without a frowning and deforming Change; which appears in All, as the Consequence of the Attacks and Conquests of another Death.

We should eagerly court this Favour, and ardently long to expire in a spiritual Way; that temporal Death may be more eligible; and our Interest in the Glories of a Life to come, may be more plain and visible to us. There is nothing gives the Saint more Uneasiness than this, that he can die no faster or sooner; being willing to experience what the Apostle did, when he said, with so much serious Pleasure, *I die daily, 1 Cor. 15. 31.* Which Words seem to me, not only to intimate, his constant Danger and Thoughts of Death corporal, but the pious Frame of his Spirit, dying to all the inviting false Glories of Sin, and all the murdering Pleasures of it.

This Death to Sin is a very great Part of our Beauty, Glory and Felicity, in this World; as it makes us look much like the heavenly Inhabitants, bright'ning the Earth with the Beauties

of Holiness; making us also more like our heavenly Father, who is all Purity and Glory. The more we die in this Way, the more it appears we are made Partakers of the divine Nature, 2 Pet. 1. 4. The more evident it is, that we have a Life in Christ, that no Enemy can attack, much less destroy; which Life is, in part, begun and enjoy'd in this World; but most gloriously consummated in the other; *As he that believes hath eternal Life, John 6. 47. And as it doth not appear what we shall be, 1 John 3. 2.* 'Tis plain, that, at present, the Believer's Life is an hidden one; the Glories, Felicities, Raptures, Triumphs and Songs, of which, will not be unvail'd to us, or enjoy'd by us, 'till natural Death, as a kind Friend, wafts us beyond every Sorrow to this inexpressible and inconceivable Life; that we may enjoy all the ravishing Pleasures of it, in the Arms of Jesus; concerning which, the Apostle says, *Eye hath not seen, neither hath Ear heard, &c. 1 Cor, 2. 9.*

The Apostle, as Pool's Commentators observe, having in the preceding Chapter, refuted superstitious Observances, placed in Things earthly and perishing, and called them off from Shadows, to mind the Substance he doth upon Supposition of what he had asserted before, infer in V. 1. That since they were risen again with Christ, it did keepe them, to set about the Duties required of those in that State, to have their Conversation in Heaven, Phil. 3. 20. Seeking after daily Supplies of Grace from Christ; maintaining daily Acquaintance and Communion with him, as their risen and exalted Lord; looking with Love and Wonder over his Business and Designs, in their Favour, at the Right Hand of God. These Duties being of the greatest Importance to promote our Growth and Comfort, the Apostle, in a different Form, V. 5. presses the same Things, in advising the warmest Affection to those celestial Enjoyments, which merit an unreserved Share in our Esteem; considering, that those Things which are on the Earth, deserve no Regard, in Comparison, with those great Things which are of an heavenly Nature. This will appear to be very true, if we consider, that heavenly Things, in the Sight and Taste we have of 'em here, yield more refreshing Sweets than all the Enjoyments of Sense and Time besides; the Psalmist gave into this Way of thinking, when he says, *Thou hast put Gladness in my Heart, more then in the Time when their Corn and Wine increas-*

ed, Psa. 4. 7. But, then, if we consider the Perfection of the Things themselves, and our perfect Enjoyment of 'em hereafter to an Eternity; when we shall be all Love, Wonder, Ecstasy and Praise, they ought not have a Rival in our Hearts; hence the Apostle adds, *Not on Things on the Earth, because they are empty and fleeting, mixt with much Poison, Imperfection and Sorrow; this is not our Rest, it is polluted, Micah 2. 10.* Add to this Consideration, the grieving Mixtures of the Bitters and Sweets of Time, together with the Brevity of our Lives; as Death will, in a little time, close our Eyes, that we shall see these Things no more, and snatch us from 'em, that we shall embrace 'em no longer; we see the Reasonableness of this Advice as our Duty; but, then, he also adds another Reason in the Words of my Text; viz. the Characters of Death upon us, and the ample Provision God has made in Christ, for our spiritual and eternal Life. [*For ye are dead, and your Life is hid with Christ in God.*] That as we profess to be dead to Sin, and every Enjoyment of Time; that as we hope we have an immense Treasure in a God in Christ, a God in Covenant, we may evince that we are so, by throwing away the Trifles of Time, and breathing with the most warm and eager Desires after our richest Portion, in the heavenly Mansions, having a Desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better, *Phil. 1. 23.*

Having thus made Way to the Words first read, in the farther opening and Improvement of 'em, I shall do these few things which follow.

- I. Enquire in what Sense Believers have this bright Description, *Of being dead, as a Part of their Excellence and Glory.* [*For ye are dead.*]
- II. Consider the Nature, Beauty and Perpetuity of the Life, Such have in Fact and Right, Possession and Reversion. [*And your Life.*]
- III. Enquire into the refreshing Reasons of its being a hidden Life, for our Comfort and Support in the Way to Glory. [*Is hid.*]
- IV. Look into the Original Residence, potent Guardians and Disposers of this Life, for its Plenitude, Conveyance and Security. [*With Christ in God.*]

V. Shew by what Means we may arrive to some Satisfaction, that we have an Interest in this hidden, this eternal Treasure.] That in dying before Death we may be less afraid of it, as well as more comfortable in our dying Moments; seeing we have such a Life in Possession and Reversion; that neither Death nor any other spiritual Enemy can take from us; that we may go with humble Song to our heavenly Home, beginning the Triumph and Joy below; With an O Death! Where is thy Sting? I Cor. 15. 55.

I. I am to enquire in what Sense Believers have this bright Description, *Of being dead*, as a Part of their Excellence and Glory. [For ye are dead]. We are not to be sure to understand it in an absolute, strict and proper Sense; for the Apostle did not write to lifeless Dust; Did not thus advise and comfort senseless Clay? Neither are we to understand it of your being dead in Sin; for that is the Deformity, not the Beauty and Glory of a Man; *Thro' the Offence of one many be dead*, Rom. 5. 15. But with Regard to the Saints, tho' they have been dead in Sin, as well as others; yet, with Wonder, at the Triumphs of Grace in their spiritual Quick'ning and Life, we may say of every one of 'em, *This my Son was dead and is alive*, Luke 15. 24. Neither yet are we to imagine, that Believers are perfectly dead to Sin, so as not to have a Stain or Infirmitie left; because, in many things, we offend all, and there is not a just Man upon Earth that doth good and sinneth not, Jam. 3. 2. Ecc. 7. 20. Neither are we to suppose, that the Saints are so dead to Sin, as to have no Struggles with it, no Opposition from it, Desires after it, or Foils by it: For, the Apostle found, that when he would do Good, Evil was present with him; the Contest sometimes so hot, and his Weakness sometimes so great, that he was as a wretched Captive in himself, Rom. 7. 21, 23, 24. But we are to understand by their being dead, a Being so, in some Measure, sincerely, tho' faintly, groaning beneath the weak'ning and defiling Presses of it, being brought to loath it, mortifie it in some Measure, and earnestly and frequently longing for an eternal Freedom from it; saying, as David, *Wash me throughly*, Psa. 51. 2. Or, as the Church, *Take away all Iniquity from us*, as Hos. 14. 2. That Man is dead to Sin, that groans under it, being burthened, and longs to be gone to that State of perfect

fect Purity, where he shall sin no more ; earnestly breathing and longing for the perfect Holiness, as well as perfect Happiness of the celestial State, having an inexpressible Satisfaction in the most perfect Conformity, to the lovely and adorable Beauties of the divine Nature. As in *E/a. 17. 15.*

I shall now advance a little further upon this Head.

1. By considering this Death to Sin actively, in the Native Beauties and Advantages of it.

2. By considering this Death relatively, in the several Things it is our Duty and Glory to die unto.

1. By considering this Death to Sin actively, in the native Beauties and shining Advantages of it. A Death to Sin has a great deal of divine Splendor and Beauty in it ; as therein we have some Rays of that Glory the shining Inhabitants of the upper World are so compleatly drest with. A Foundation, for this End, was laid in the Death of Christ ; *Knowing this, that our Old Man was crucified together with Christ, that the Body of Sin might be destroyed, Rom. 6. 6.* The Death of Christ has a sure Influence upon all his Members to this glorious End ; there Sin received a mortal Stab, a fatal Wound, that Sin might die, and the Believer live. We died virtually in our publick Head ; and Sin lay dead at the Cross, beneath the Redeemer's bleeding Feet ; and as a Consequence of this, (the condemning Guilt of Sin, expiring at the Redeemer's Exit) we come to have it die in the Impurity of it, by the bright'ning and beautifying Work of the Sanctifier in our own Souls ; which Work, for the Death of Sin, and our dying to it, in the greatest Perfection, is, what we should pray for, that the God of Peace might sanctifie you, *óλοτελεῖς*, that is, perfectly. But to be more particular.

1. 'Tis a Death without Sickness, Weakness, or Pain. The more we die to Sin, the less sick, weak, or uneasy we are. If we are sick, 'tis when Sin is too healthy and vigorous in us ; for when Sin is sick, weak and dying in us, the Soul is most in health ; as when Diseases die, the Body lives and doth well. Health of Soul is what we should pray for, tendering it as much as that of the Body, *John 3. 2.* Regarding that, above all things, is the greatest Mercy. Thus 'tis also a Death without Weakness ; for the weaker Sin is, the stronger is the Soul in Faith, Hopes, Love, Comfort and Joy ; 'Tis a Death that has a Glory in

in its Influence, as it makes the Saint better, stronger and easier in his Soul.

Whereas, when Sin is easy and well there, we are feeble and sore broken; as *David* was, *Psal. 38.8.* Roaring because of the Disquietness of his Heart. Thus 'tis also a Death without Pain: O! How easy is the Soul when it sees Sin dying; every painful Thought vanishes away, and joyful Hopes and Triumphs succeed?

We can't look upon any other Death, but 'tis amazing and shocking to the Mind: However, as to this, the Soul of the Saint looks upon the dying Enemy, and his Death with Ease, Pleasure, Smiles and Songs: But, when we can't see the Beauties of this lovely Scene, we feel uneasy Pains of Mind; as Sin has too much Ease and Life in us, and we too much Ease and Life in that: saying, as the Psalmist, *My Heart is sore pained within me, Psal. 55. 4.*

2. 'Tis a Death without the Shades of Sorrow or Despair: 'Tis full of every Glory and Beauty: Natural Death fills the Mind with Sorrow and Despair of Life, in its awful and painful Advances: But this Death of Sin, and to it, is felt with ravishing Pleasure and Joy; there is every Beauty in it, and every Glory after it. It brightens the Mind with every Lustre; it opens the Eyes with refreshing Evidence of an Interest in the divine Favour; banishes Sorrow from the Heart; and cures the Soul of Doubts, Fears and Despair.

The dying of Sin, and our dying to it, makes Way for the more plentiful Distribution of Grace and Comfort, from the inexhaustible Treasures of eternal Goodness; not keeping back good Things from us, as it often does, when we are too lively for that, or that too lively in us, *Isai. 59. 2.* Natural Death causes Sorrow in ourselves and others; but this fills the Soul with Evidence and Joy; the other draws Floods of Tears from our Eyes; but this dries 'em up, fills the Heart with Joy, and brightens the Face with Smiles. O! What a Mercy then is this Death? And how fond should we be to die it every Day? This Death of the righteous may we die, that we may have the Beauty of the Saints in this World, and their Glory in the next.

3. 'Tis a Death without Dejection of Spirits, or Loss of Life. This is impossible in Nature; but here, 'tis not only possible, but certainly Fact. What Dejections are there in Nature, what Faintings

Faintings of Spirit, what Pressures from the icy Hand of Death, to quench the vital Flame? But in this Death the Spirits are not stifled, or the vital Heat abated: For, the more a Believer dies this Death, the more his Spirits rise, and the more every spiritual Flame increases. It is the greatest Dejection of Spirit at sometimes to the Believer, when he thinks of his having too much Life for Sin; *Mine Iniquities, (says David) are gone over my Head as an heavy Burthen, they are too heavy for me, Psal. 38. 4.* This was the Reason of the Prophets giving that mournful Character of the Jewish State; of which, 'tis said, *Ier. 1. 5 The whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart is faint.* The remaining Life of Sin in the Saints, and the remitting Life they have in their Inclinations to it, sinks their Spirits into Suspicions, Jealousies, Doubts and Fears; makes 'em faint in their Sighing, and find no Rest, *Jer. 45. 3.* But, when they experience themselves dying apace, the faster they die, the more their Spirits revive, with Thanks to God for a Victory over it; and the more their Heat increases to God and Holiness, as well as their shining Passions against Sin; because, we find, Death to Sin, and Love to Holiness, joyn'd together by the Psalmist; when he said, *I hate vain Thoughts, but thy Law do I love, Psa. 119. 113.* Such Circumstances as these I have been mentioning of, as waiting upon this Death to brighten its Nature, and beautifie us in the dying of it, can't, in a proper Sense, be fixt upon any other; especially the mournful Circumstances of Nature's Exit, where there is every sorrowful Dejection, and every fatal Chill, dropping in cold Streams from a dying Face.

However, there is yet one Circumstance more, which seems to recommend this necessary Death, with agreeable Surprise; as it is a Death without the Loss of Life; the more we die this Death, the more we live; the more we die, the more lively and vigorous we are; for to be spiritually minded, which is a Death to Sin, is Life and Peace, *Rom. 8. 6.* This Death therefore is a Life, having more Charms, Beauties and Enjoyments in it, than any other Life has; being a Death divinely sweet, a Life divinely bright. Where there is in any one this Death, there is most of Life and Liveliness; for the Apostle finds and leaves 'em together in the Saint; when he says, *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto Sin, but alive unto God, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. 6. 10, 11.*

4. 'Tis a Death without wasting Corruption after it. The more there is of this Death in the Saints, the more they thrive and flourish, the more there is of something towards Perfection and Glory in 'em.

When the Body dies, it returns to Dust, *Gen. 3. 19.* And is sown in Corruption, *1 Cor. 15. 42.* Lies in the Grave mouldering and wasting away, 'till there are no distinct sepearate Remains of it; but promiscuously mingled with its Original, and reduced to be what *Job* calls his Father; *I have said to Corruption thou art my Father, Job 17. 14.* But the Consequences of this Death are vastly different, *Rom. 6. 10.* As the Circumstances of it are wonderful bright; for, when we die this Death to Perfection, there will be no more Complaints of the Want of this Death or Life, no more Life to Sin, or Fear of its Pollutions and Invasions again; *But having our Fruit unto Holiness, and the End everlasting Life, Rom. 6. 2.* We shall Sin and be sick no more; being as perfectly dead to Sin, as Angels and glorified Spirits are above, and as the Inhabitants Bright; of which happy Land, it is said, the Inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; as *Isai. 33. 24.*

2. I am to consider this Death relatively, in the several Things it is our Duty and Glory to die unto. The more extensive and intense this is to every Thing, short of a God in Christ, short of perfect Holiness and eternal Blessedness, the more glorious and comfortable this Death is; serving us with Evidences very bright, and Experiences very sweet to our Souls. We answer the Ends and Designs of Grace, to the Glory of God, and the Comfort of our own Souls, when we die most to every Thing he would have us; shewing, that we have the Possession of what we profess. This seems to be what Christ requires, *Luke 9. 59. 60.* where he commands one, *Follow me;* but the requesting Answer was, *Suffer me first to go and bury my Father;* to which Christ replies, *Let the Dead bury their Dead;* which shews us, that we should die to every Thing, short of a close Attendance upon Christ, in the amiable Employments of Religion.

But I shall be something more particular under this Head, shewing you, what Things the Saints are dead unto.

1. Saints are dead to all the pleasing Sweets of killing Sin. How shall we that are dead, live any longer therein? *Rom. 6. 2.* We profess to be dead to it, as we were baptized into the Death

of Christ, *Rom. 6. 3.* And, therefore 'tis our Duty, Interest and Glory, to shew how much we are in Earnest; manifesting our Death to Sin, by abstaining from all Appearances of it, by our hating the Garments spotted with the Flesh, and by mortifying the Deeds of the Body, that we might live; Evidencing our Interest in the Death of Christ, by living unto Righteousness, *1 Pet. 2. 24.* That having the comfortable Experience of our dying with Christ here, we may have the most plain, delightful and refreshing Evidence, of our living with him forever hereafter; for, we are told by the Apostle, *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him, Rom. 6. 8.*

Believers are dead to Sin from what they see in it, and sorrowfully feel from it; *They know its End is bitter as Wormwood, Prov. 5. 4.* And not only so, but they find the bitter Effects of it now, in their Defilements and Weak'nings, in their numerous Wants and Doubts, proceeding from the Loss of spiritual Light and Comfort in the Lord; seeing this, therefore they are dead to it, in their Fears of it, their Passions against it, and their Struggles with it.

2. Saints are dead to all the dear Enjoyments and Comforts of Time. By this Head I don't mean or design to take you off from a just Regard to the Favours of Providence; for, Believers may be dead in this Sense, without slighting or neglecting other Spring Mercies. We are not to be unaffected with the Favours of Providence; but in tasting the Sweets of Time, adore our kind Benefactor, and improve his Indulgence to his Glory: Neither would I plead for a Stoick Frame of Mind; when God lets down his Arm, and snatches away our Relations, either more gradually or more suddenly, from us, to the World of Spirits; *We are to bear the Voice of the Rock, and consider who appointed it, Micah 6. 9.* For, when our Lord said to the Woman who had left her Son, *Weep not,* he did not mean to divest Nature of our Passions if we could, or be guilty of that Sin of not turning to him that smiteth; considering that, as one observes, to be above the Stroke of Passions, is a Condition equal to Angels: To be in a State of Sorrow, without the Sense of Sorrow, is a Disposition beneath Beasts; but duly to regulate our Sorrows, and bind our Passions under the Rod, is the Wisdom, Duty and Excellence of a Christian. You, therefore, amongst the Relatives of our deceas'd Brother, should manifest your being dead.

(in the Sense I mean) to the Enjoyments of Time, by an humble, dutiful, and cheerful Submission to the Will of God, who hath laid your Husband, Father, or Brother, in the Dust, and taken him away. Believers should always, and indeed, sometimes are, so dead to their Comforts and Enjoyments, as to be willing to part with 'em, when God calls for 'em; and not only so, but would be more wean'd from their Comforts of a lower Nature, while they have 'em: From hence, it is, that we find the Apostle, 1 Cor. 7. 29, 30, 31. Saying, *But this I say Brethren; the Time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have Wives, be as tho' they had none; and they that weep, as tho' they wept not; and they that rejoice, as tho' they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as tho' they possessed not; and they that use this World, as not abusing it; for the Fashion of this World passeth away.*

3. Dead to all the Brevity of Time, and all the Remains of Life. Life is a most valuable Mercy in itself; and Mankind, in their Senses, put a just Value upon it, having the most tender Regard to the Security of it; *Skin for Skin, Job 2. 4.* But yet, the Believer, in the Execution of Faith, sometimes chides the Delays of Time, when the descending Glories of the heavenly State come within View; it leaves such an extatic Influence on the Mind, that 'tis in a Strait, between Duty and Glory, Life and Death, Time and Eternity; as the Apostle was, Phil. 1. 23. *O! How heavy do the Sands of the Glass fall? How slow is the Motion of our fleeting Hours? How long is this short time, that keeps us in Pain below, and stands between the Aims of our Lord, that our Souls can't be so soon as we would have 'em in his ravishing Embraces?* We are then ready to complain of the Strength, not the Weakness of those Bonds, which tye us down to Dust, Fains and Sorrows of Time; for, tho' the Saint is willing to wait all the Days of his appointed Time; yet he is ready to say too as Job, *I loath it, I would not live always, Job 7. 16.* But again;

4. The Saints are dead to all the Ways for Life eternal, short of the free Grace of Christ. Thus the Apostle says, Rom. 7. 4. *Wherefore, my Brethren, ye also are become dead to the Law by the Body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth Fruit unto God.* And, Gal. 2. 19. *For I, thro' the Law, am dead to the Law, that I might live unto God.* From whence, we see,

am- see, that Believers, tho' they are sometimes dead, are not
who dead to Duty; and that tho' they are not dead to the Perfor-
and mance of Duty, yet they are dead to any Dependence on it; and
me- this is an humble Beauty which makes 'em brighter than others,
to be who are ignorant of God's Righteousness, *Rom. 10. 3. Phil 2.*
only 7, 8, 9. Our Life is not by our Works, but by Grace, in the
Conveyances of it, from the Person of Christ in God, with
whom it is hid, both for Security and Distribution.

Thus I have shewn you in what Respects sincere Souls are
dead; and now I shall proceed to the next Head proposed.

II. To consider the Native Beauty and Perpetuity of the Life
Saints have in Fact and Right, Possession and Reversion. [And
your Life] The Fountain of this Life, as another Part of the
Believer's Character, is originally, *Psal. 36. 9*, and solely in the
Person of Christ; and, from hence it is, that he is called our
Life, *V. 4*. This Life is not gain'd by our Industry; tho' it may
be improv'd, brightened and strengthened by it: For as Mr. F.
observes, Page 242. Vol. 1. ' Nor is this Principle or Habit,
acquired by accustoming ourselves to holy Action, as natural
Habits are acquired by frequent Acts, which beget a Disposi-
tion, and thence grow up to an Habit or second Nature; but
it's infus'd or implanted into the Soul by the Spirit of God;
For thus the Spirit gives a new Heart, and puts within us a
new Spirit, Ez. 36. 25, 26. So that, as Christ is the original
Cause of this Life, the Spirit of Grace is the effective Cause.
We are infinitely obliged to the Quickener who conveys this
Life, having quickened us when we were dead, *Eph. 2. 1*. But
any Notion of it, as effected any other Way, destroys, in a great
Measure, the Obligation to Xt. and indulges, in a great Measure
too, a sinful Life to our own Righteousness. If you live, 'tis by the
Grace of God thro' his Spirit alone, who gives a Life, superna-
tural, or a supernatural Being. Hence we are said to be born
of the Spirit, *John 3. 6, 8*. That he is a Spirit of Life in quick-
ening of us; and that a peculiar Regard may be had to the
Glory of our dying Lord, as the Fundamental Cause of it; we
are said to be quickened together with him, *Col. 2. 13*. All the
Glories and Beauties of our spiritual Life, rising out of the
Clouds and Shades, of the kind Redeemer's Death. But, as we
have a Life, full of the Endearments of the divine Love in Fact,
so we have a Right to the more bright and perfect Consumma-
tion

tion of it in another World. Let us therefore proceed to consider, more particularly, the Nature, Beauty and Perpetuity of it, as inchoate, and also, as consummate.

1. This Life is brightned with the shining Rays of a divine Lustre. There is something very august, something that looks more like Heaven than any thing upon Earth besides: Hence we are said, to be made Partakers of the divine Nature, 2 Pet. 1. 4. Not essentially or hypostatically, but by the Inhabitation of the Spirit of God in us; *As we are the Temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in us, 1 Cor. 3. 16.* This Life of the new Creature in itself, has many Rays of Divinity, and Marks of Glory on it, refining and brightning the Soul with a divine Beauty; Christ, our Life, seems to be charm'd and ravished with it himself; when he says to the Church, *Thou art all Fair, my Love, Cant. 4. 7. And thou hast ravi/b'd my Heart, Cant. 4. 9.* This Life, says one, surmounts the natural, rational, and moral Life, of the unsanctified, as much as the angelical Life excells the Life that flies, and Worms of the Earth that do live; Besides which, it is the same Life in Nature, tho' not in Degree, with the cœlestial; and in the infusing of it, God lets down some Prelibrations of our future Glory, which shall hereafter be revealed in us, *Rom, 8 18.*

2. This Life is replenish'd with every spiritual Excellence. So excellent, that it is a Transition of Hints to a Man, and seems to resemble the Glory, Honour, and Happiness of a Translation; for such as have this Life, are translated from the Power of Darkness, into the Kingdom of the dear, affectionate, and bright Son of God, *Col. 1. 13.* It is from the Excellence of this Life in the Saints, that they have so many Characters of Excellency and Glory fix'd upon 'em; from this Life it is, that they are denominated the Excellent in the Earth, *Psa. 16. 3.* This makes 'em more excellent than their Neighbours, *Prov. 12. 16.* Being one of the Ornaments they are blessed with, *Ez. 16. 7.* As also, an Excellency that God takes a peculiar Delight in, *Psa. 47. 4.* As he is the Excellence of Jacob, and takes Delight in it too.

‘ Add to all this, that by this Life, God has honoured us beyond the Angels above; made it a peculiar Priviledge, says one, as a Mercy helg'd in from the World; That is to perish: And having so great a Resemblance of, and being so very near a-kin to the heavenly Life, it must needs be excellent.

3. This

3. This Life is attended with the most solid and permanent Sweets of Time. ' All the Delights of the sensual Life (says one) all the Pleasures that ever your Lusts can give, are but as the putrid stinking Waters of a corrupt Pond, where Toads lie croaking and spawning, to the crystal Streams of the most pure and pleasant Fountain, ' In Laughter the Heart is sorrowful ; there is a mixt Allay with every Comfort, and sometimes Poyson in 'em too ; besides the vanishing and perishing Nature of every sublunary Good, as an Evidence of their fickle short-liv'd Subsistence, fading and perishing under our Hands in the Use and Enjoyment of 'em, as 'tis said of other Things, *Col. 2. 22.* But as for this Life, of which Believers have the Possession, and to which they have a larger Right in the Perfection and Enjoyment of it at last, there is no such Thing ; for as it is a Life of Communion with God, and a Conformity, in some Measure, to the Perfections of the Divine Nature, so 'tis a Life of solid Sweetness, Pleasure and Joy. Our Days and Years would be more full of these, if we acted more agreeably to this Divine and Heavenly Life, *Job 36. 11.* Then we should have more of that Peace and spiritual Mirth, which is proper to this State ; for to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace, *Rom. 8. 6.* From whence one observes, ' Tis a most serene placid Life, such a Soul becomes so far as it is influenc'd and sanctify'd by the Spirit, the very Region of Life and Peace.' And as another learned Man observes, ' When one Thing is thus predicted of another, in *casu recto*, it speaks their intimate Connection ; Peace is so connatural to this Life, that you may either call it, a Life that hath Peace in it, or a Peace that hath Life in it.' Besides the Composure of it, there is a great deal of Pleasure and Delight in it too. ' Regeneration (or spiritual Life) says one) is the Term from which all true Pleasure commences ; you never live a merry Day, 'till you begin to live to God ; *ergo*, it's said, *Luke 15. 24.* When the Prodigal Son was return'd to his Father and reconciled, then they began to be merry : O ! how we should Love and long for it.

4. This Life is accompany'd with vigorous Activity for God. There may be some Suppressions and Soffocations of this vital Flame, and the Soul may want the more vigorous Actings of it, under the Divine Influence, as the Case was with *David*, *Psal. 119.* Yet 'tis an active Life ; the Language of a Soul that has

has this Life is, Lord what wilt thou have me to do? *Act. 9. 6.* Lord quicken and enlarge me, *Psal. 119. 32.* For as our Lord Christ is the meritorious Cause of our spiritual Life, so he is the great Exemplar of the Actions of it, which we should industriously labour to imitate and learn of him, to use and act his this Life as well as we can, in all the Duties of Religion, and all the Works of Piety and Charity: I might, indeed, run over the Activity of this Life, in the several Branches of it, but the Province is too large, and the Time too short. *Ergo,* *1 Cor. 15. 5.* This Life is never attended with mortal Decays. Believers that have this Life, are born of incorruptible Seed, *1 Pet. 1. 23.* Which liveth and abideth for ever. Hence it is that the Saints shall not totally die, nor sin to lasting Impenitence, or be guilty of the Iniquity unto Death, because their Seed remaineth or abideth in 'em, *1 John 3. 9.* Every other Life may expire; the Life of the Body especially must end; but this is a Life no Danger can make Uncertain, nor yet all the strongest Efforts of our Enemies put an End to it, because 'tis hid with Christ in God; and as this Life is maintain'd, and carry'd on in our being renew'd Day by Day, so the Spirituality and Glory of this Life shines more and more, unto the perfect Day, *2 Cor. 3. 19. Prov. 4. 18.*

6. This Life is now preserved, and, at last, consummated, as a Consequence of the Care and Influence of Christ our living Head. He has not left it to our Care; he has carried the main Stock of it in himself to Heaven, securing it for Believers there; that tho' this Life is often subject to Decays below, yet the Intercession of Christ is employ'd to secure it from Death. *I have pray'd for thee* (says Christ to Peter) *that thy Faith fail not.* *Luke 22. 32.* As our spiritual Life is thus owing to the exalted Redeemer's Prayers, so it's Continuance and Perfection depends upon the Plenitude of this Life in him, in it's gradual Conveyances to us; for hence it is, Christ says, *Because I shall live, ye shall live also,* *John 14. 19.* So that as we have it in Possession, we have a Right to it in Reversion, where this Life will be no more weak in any of it's Operations! For in this Sense, I conceive, Believers are said to have Everlasting Life already, springing up in their Souls, *John 4. 14.* And, therefore, while we are absent in the Body of Sin and Death, we are absent from the Lord, who has this eternal Life in himself. See *1 John 5. 11.* Having

Having thus gone thro' the Beauties of the Believer's Death, and the Glories of his Life, I shall advance to the next,

III. To enquire into the refreshing Reasons of it's being a hidden Life; for our Comfort and Support in the Way to Glory [is hid] The Believer's being a hidden Life in general, shews what a tender Love God in Christ has to 'em, in the Cares of his Heart, and the Resolves of his eternal Will to secure it to 'em as an everlasting Possession. Happy are the People that are in such a Case; yea, happy is that People whose God is the Lord, *Psa. 144. 15.* And in the Views of the Loss of one Life, to see the permanent Security of another; and a better we may say; his Breath goeth forth, he returneth to his Earth, in that very Day his Thoughts perish; but happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his Help, whose Hope is the Lord his God. This Life being thus hid and secured with Christ in God, is to comfort the Saints with the hopeful Assurance, that they don't run uncertainly, or fight as those that beat the Air, *1 Cor. 9. 26.* What can encourage us in our Christian Race more, and induce us to contemn every Attack, Difficulty and Danger in our Way, to the Perfection of this Life? That tho' we are oft afraid of perishing, our Life is hidden and secur'd above, from every Danger, as neither Death, Sin, Satan, or the World, can rob us of it.

Let me, therefore, shew in what kind and refreshing Respects this Important Life, is an hidden one; as it shall not, cannot die when we do, as it shall not sink into the Dust with us, nor be taken from us.

The refreshing Reasons of it's being a hidden Life, I conceive, are these amongst others:

1. Because it was hidden in the eternal Purposes of God, before the Existence of Creatures, and hidden from 'em at first when they began to be, for very kind Ends. Thus, I suppose, it is call'd an hidden Life; this the hidden Treasure, *Matt. 13. 14.* Which, from the Beginning of the World, hath been hid in God, *Eph. 3. 9.* This is the hidden Wisdom which God ordain'd, before the World, to our Glory, *1 Cor. 2. 7.* He fixed his Thoughts very early upon a People for his Praise, who might have a Life out of the Ruins of the Fall, and against all Oppositions of Hell:

Whether this supernatural Life was hidden from Angels after their Existance (as they could not know any Thing of it before they were) is very difficult to determine ; but it seems reasonable, because supernatural, as I think, Dr. *Goodwin* states it or whether these Spirits made an Attempt upon this Life, when they made War in Heaven, and rebell'd against God, being fill'd with Pride against the Person in whom it was lodg'd ; and Envie against our secure Happiness in the Way, is very difficult to determine too ; tho' it may be that the falling Spirits Envy might be greater. That tho' probably they might destroy that open Life we all had in *Adam*, they saw no Room to hope for Success in their Attempts to destroy our hidden Life in Christ with God ; and, perhaps, this might be an Increase of their malicious Grief, that they could do no more extensive Mischief, in our universal Ruin ; for, as thro' the Devil's malicious, politick and powerful Efforts, we all died in *Adam*, as in *Rom. 5.* So no Doubt he would have destroy'd this Life too, if it had not been hidden in Christ ; and then where had we been ? Thus I suppose, also, that this Life in Christ was hidden from *Adam* both before and after the Fall. That the Knowledge of it before, might not give Occasion thro' Satan's Suggestions, for Presumption in the innocent Creature, since Satan was so ready to say, *Ye shall be as Gods*, *Gen. 3. 5.* Thus for some Time, also, it was hidden from him after the Fall, that being racked with the utmost Despair, he might not only be more careful of his future Conduct, in hating and fearing Sin the more ; but that the News of a Life secured above, in the design'd Seed of the Woman there, according to the Promise we have, *Gen. 3. 15.* might affect him the more ; and not only so, but engage him to admire the Divine Patience and Goodness that, Christ, should be promised as his Life, before he was threatned with Labour, Toil, Sickness, Pains, Sorrows or Death, as the Order of the History informs you. O ! what an astonishing Mercy, then, is it, that this Life was not trusted with *Adam*, but hidden with Christ ? For if it had been so, this had been gone, and our Case would have been remediless and hopeless as the Devil's is.

2. Because it was, and is hidden, in the Constitution, Election, and Fullness of the Mediator's Person, that we might very plentifully share in it. O ! what an amazing Honour and Priviledge is it, for us fallen, defiled Rebels and Traitors, to have

have our best Stock of Life hidden in Christ? O! that ever we should in Purpose and Fact on this Account, have the Character of God's hidden ones, *Psa. 83. 3.* O! that ever we should have a Life hid in Christ, amongst the Rich Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, which are hid in him, *Col. 2. 3.* O! that ever Christ should be set up from everlasting for us, to secure our best Stock, and bless us with a better Life than ever we lost in *Adam*, or that he should take any Delight in that Trust of the best Life we can enjoy, or rejoice in the Thoughts of his securing it for us, and conveying it to us, *Prov. 8. 23. 31.* O! that ever we should have a plentiful Distribution of it here, receiving Grace for Grace out of his Fullness; or that this Life should be so in God, as for the Father to take Pleasure in the Life of Worms, Dust and Ashes, and in that Fullness he had repos'd in Christ, as Mediator for this glorious End. See *John 1. 16. Col. 1. 19.*

3. Because this Life was hidden to secure the Loss of it, by the Fall, with the certain Conveyance and Continuance of it afterwards. Every Blessing, and amongst the rest, this important Life, was secured in Heavenly Places, and promis'd to us before the World began, *Eph. 1. 3. Titus 1. 2.* Thus, as to certain Conveyance, Christ's People shall be willing to receive it, *Psa. 110. 3.* And as to it's certain Continuance afterwards, it's said, *They shall never perish, John 10. 28.* But again,

4. Because this Life is hidden, from the greatest Part of Mankind, which are those who die Impenitent. This Life, and the Way of conveying it, is foolishness to the Wise and Self-righteous; it's a stumbling-block and Foolishness, *1 Cor. 1. 23.* It is hidden for the Glory of distinguishing Grace, *I thank thee, O! Father,* says Christ, *Matt. 11. 25.* It is hidden from 'em as they know Nothing of the Peace and Joy this Life affords to the pious Mind; Strangers to this Life do not intermeddle with it's private affecting and transporting Joys, *Prov. 14. 10.*

5. Because this Life is hidden from the Saints themselves, when they are in the Dark, and their most extended Thoughts are inadequate Ideas of the Perfection of this Life. This Life is hidden from the Saints when God hides his Face, and when they can't feel the lively Operations of it in their own

Souls, carrying 'em forth vigorously to every Holy Thought, and every good Work. The Shades and Influence of Corruption hinder our seeing the Glory of this Life in us, or the certain Operations of it in our Minds or Lives. How vastly short must we be in forming any Ideas of it's Perfection in the World of how Spirits, since Eye han't seen ; and consequently the brightest the Beauties, and sweetest Joys of it, hidden from us, while we are where we see but in Part, and know but in Part. I shall, *ergo*, conclude this Head with the Notes of a judicious Divine upon this Text, wherein you'll see the Reasons of our Life being a hidden one, in a few Words, says he, ' A Godly Man is much hidden from himself ; his Life is not only hidden from the World, but, in a great Measure, from himself ; the Excellency of his spiritual State surpasseth his present Sight ; And as this Life is hidden from the Sight of Worldly Men, so from the Malice of the Prince of the World, he would devour our Spiritual Life as he did the Natural Life of *Adam*, were it not hidden (which his was not) in a Mediator ; so that it's being hid, denotes not only the Secrecy of this spiritual Life, but the Security of it also. ' Having thus given you the Reasons why this Life is hid, I proceed :

IV. To look into the Original Residence, and potent Guardians, and disposers of this Life, for it's Conveyance, Plenitude, Security and Perfection. Upon which Head, I have not Time to say any more than what is furnish'd to my Hand by Mr. C. who says, ' Our Life is hid with Christ, by Virtue of our Union with him, as Christ is in God, by Union with the Father, Christ in God, and our Life in Christ ; the Flesh, then, and the Devils, may as well pull God out of Heaven, and overthrow the Security of Christ, pull him from the right hand of the Father, as rob a true Believer of his spiritual Life, or pull Grace, which is Christ, form'd in the Heart, out of a new Creature. '

This brings me to consider the next Thing propos'd :

V. To shew by what Mediums we may arrive to some Satisfaction, that we have an Interest, in this hidden, the eternal Treasure of Life.

I. Such

1. Such as have this Life know when they had it not.
2. Know when they were in Anguish about it, and Despair of it.
3. Such know how plentifully, how feelingly, and at last, of how comfortably this Life was wrought or breath'd into 'em, by the Spirit of Christ, our Life.
4. Such know the quick'ning Energy of this Life, in the Liberty, Enlargement, and Vivacity in Holy Duties.
5. Such mournfully experience the Weakness of it, as sometimes ready to die in their Souls.
6. Such ardently long for the Perfection of this Life, when there will be no Deadness to benumb, or Enemies to oppose the bright Operations of it any more.

But as I have detain'd you too long already ; I shall not enlarge upon these Heads, but make some Improvement.

i. To the Widow of our deceas'd Brother.

Let not the Suddainess of this awful Stroke of Providence, so much surprize as improve the Engaging you to resolve on a more close Attendance upon God, in all the Duties proper to this divine and spiritual Life; that as you know not the Day of your Death, any more than you thought of the sudden Exit of your once other-self, but a little before it happen'd, so be you in this way, making yourself ready as the Lamb's Wite does. Remember you have other Work besides Sorrowing, upon your Hands, such as the Duties of Submission, Preparation to follow; and as the Family is devolv'd in all it's Weights and Cares, see that yours are brought up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord, labouring to impress their Minds as well as your own, with the Awfulness of the Stroke, and the speedily good Improvement you ought to make of this shocking Providence. Remember you have an Husband in Heaven, that can never die; the Lord of Hosts is his Name; so as you had Hopes, that your Earthly one was a good Man, you have no Reason to sorrow as without Hope, but be comforted and composed with this Thought, that if you persevere in Faith and Holiness, you'll find, meet, and enjoy him again in the Arms of Christ, when a little more Time is spent by you here on Earth;

Remember that tho' you have lost the Lives of Children, and a Husband gone a little before you, that there is a Life in Christ you can never loose.

Remember that you submit with humble Chearfulness to the Divine Will, because God does not only act as a King, but as a Father ; so that when he afflicts his Children, he does not only do it, because he will, but because it is for your good, *Rom. 2. 22.* And thus, as one observes, ' The Soul grows wise, by sitting still and quiet under the Rod.

Remember Christ, our exalted Head, knows your Sorrow, and in seeing yours over your other own departed Dust, he hath Compassion on you, as this Scene affected him on Earth, *Luke 7. 13.* And he's touch'd in Heart with it too.

2. To the Children.

My dear young Friends, by the suddainess of a Father's Death, without the Pains of Sicknes, or gradual Forms of Death, you see the Brevity of your Lives, and the Uncertainty of your Continuance here, that you are not too young to die, and therefore ought not to put the Evil Day far from you. Your Creator is to be remember'd, and it cannot be done too early.. O ! *ergo*, be more awful, serious, and constant in Prayer ; for when you conclude a Duty at Night, begging Grace and spiritual Life, the Light of another Day may be the Darkness of Death, and the Enjoyment of another Duty very uncertain. Tho' you are young and strong, you may die as soon as your Parent did ; and, therefore, how quickly and intensly should your Thoughts be employ'd about the Affairs, Works and Enjoyments of a better Life than This is ? Why do you think, Children, that this Life is an hidden one, but that you might search for it, as for hid Treasure, and every one apart upon your Knees, cry, *Lord, that I might live in thy Sight ; I have my Life given me at my Petition !* Remember your Father's Goodness to imitate it ; and as for his Infismitiess, let 'em be Way Marks for you ; *ergo*, as the Failings of God's People are recorded for our Warning, so they should be seen not to follow them, but as much as in us lies, we should flee from 'em. ' Do you thus act ? And, O ! Friends (as one says) How many Graves have you and I seen open'd for our dear Relations ? How oft has Death come up into our Windows, and sundon'd the Delight of your Eyes ?

It

It is but a little While, and we shall go to 'em ; we and they are distinguish'd but by short Intervals. — O ! that by these Things your own Death might be both more easy and more familiar to you ; the oftner it visits us, the more we should be acquainted with it, and the more of belov'd Relations it removes before us, the Less of either Snare or Entanglements remains for us, when our Turn comes.

To conclude : I wou'd have you all remember what your deceas'd Parent recommended to one of you, a Day or two ago, That she would mind Regeneration or spiritual Life, which she had been reading of ; urging it with this Circumstance, That he should not be long with her.

3. To the Church.

Our Lord and King, you see, has made another Breach upon us, after many great ones before, removing, in a great Measure, our Trust in an Arm of Flesh. O ! that we may be humbled under the mighty Hand of God, and live more absolutely upon him, who cares for his Church.

Our deceas'd Brother was a sincere kind Friend to some of us in particular, and a faithful Friend to the Church in general, being a willing Partaker of a Part of the Burthen of your Tryals and Expences, to erect an House for God, and defray the Charges of the Publick Worship, humbly hoping he did not assist in building the Ark, without an Interest in the God of it, and so lost in a Deluge notwithstanding. His Memory ought to be regarded by us, and his Death should furnish Matter for Prayer, that God would grant us, his People, other Supports in his Room, that the Cause of Christ, in our Hands, may be comfortably maintain'd. Let us examine into the Evidence we have in this Life, and long for the Perfection of it, when as one has it, we shall live we know not how, and be we know not what.

4. To the World.

If this Life is a hidden Life, how importunate should you be, of the Revelation of it to your Souls ? For else all your Comforts will die when you die.

Is it a hidden Life ? Then don't be too rash and censorious in judging ; the Beauties of this Life may be hidden, and the

Glories

Glories of it eclipsed by our many and frequent Infirmities ; so that if you have but Eyes to see your own, you'll be more tender in this Case.

Remember Elias as had too much of the Element of Fire in his Constitution, being subject to like Passions with us, tho' he was a great Prophet, and had the Honour of a Translation. Take Heed, *ergo*, to the Beam in your own Eyes, and remember that this Life is an hidden Life. On this Consideration amongst others, that tho' you see the Saints open Infirmities, their private Groans and Tears, on that Account, are concealed from you, and therefore should fear, least at any Time you condemn one whom the Lord commendeth.

F I N I S.



